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Soldiers and Sailors Historical Society
of Rhode Island

Personal Narratives

FIFTH SERIES, No. 5



Operations of the Cavalry Corps,

February 27, to March 8, 1865

Participated in by the

First Rhode Island Cavalry

By WILLIAM GARDINER

[Late First Sergeant, First Rhode Island Cavalry.]





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PERSONAL NARRATIVES
OF EVENTS IN THE
WAR OF THE REBELLION,

BEING PAPERS READ BEFORE THE
RHODE ISLAND SOLDIERS AND SAILORS
HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

FIFTH SERIES—No. 5.

PROVIDENCE:
PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIETY.
1896.

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OPERATIONS OF THE CAVALRY CORPS

MIDDLE MILITARY DIVISION,

ARMIES OF THE UNITED STATES,

FROM

FEBRUARY 27 TO MARCH 8, 1865,

PARTICIPATED IN BY THE

First Rhode Island Cavalry

BY

WILLIAM GARDINER,

[Late First Sergeant First Rhode Island Cavalry.]

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[Edition limited to two hundred and fifty copies.]

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I AM to present a paper that differs somewhat in its character from those that have been read before this Society in the past. Its purpose is to correct what has been accepted as history of one of the Army incidents of the Civil War, by giving the *facts* in narrative form of that incident, and the facts presented will differ materially from the official record of the government of the event described. The narrative has been written under the title :

OPERATIONS OF THE CAVALRY CORPS, MIDDLE
MILITARY DIVISION, ARMIES OF THE UNITED
STATES, FROM FEBRUARY 27 TO MARCH 8,
1865, PARTICIPATED IN BY THE FIRST RHODE
ISLAND CAVALRY.

THE glorious campaign of Sheridan, in the Valley of Virginia, will abide in our memory so long as life endures, and it will never cease to be a source of pride to the American people, (north of "Mason and Dixon's" line) —so long as great deeds, prolific of great results, are appreciated.

During the winter of 1864 and 1865, immediately succeeding the campaign mentioned, a cavalry force of about 10,000 was left in the valley with camp near Winchester.

The monotony of camp life and its duties was broken early on the morning of Monday, February 27, 1865, by the welcome order, "break camp," and each man was given five days' rations in haversacks, and thirty pounds of forage for his horse; fifteen

day's rations of coffee, sugar, and salt, were taken in wagons, one for each division.

Our train consisted of three wagons, eight ambulances, eight pontoon boats, and ammunition train; no other wagons were permitted to accompany the train.

The effective force of this expedition was as follows :

First Division, Brig.-Gen. Thomas	
C. Devin, officers and men, . . .	5,047
One Section, Cos. C and E, Fourth	
U. S. Artillery, officers and men,	54
Third Division, Maj.-Gen. George	
A. Custer, officers and men, . . .	4,840
One Section, Co. M, Second U. S.	
Artillery, officers and men, . . .	46
	<hr/>
Total,	9,987

With this force, all in fine condition, with "Little Phil" at the head, we marched out from camp in the early morning, and headed up the valley into a country made so desolate by Sheridan's vigorous

campaigning the previous Fall, and bare of subsistence to that extent, that a crow flying over it would have to take his rations with him.

General Grant had been for several months exceedingly anxious to destroy the Central Railroad and the James River Canal, both great arteries of supply for the City of Richmond, and the Army of North Virginia. General David Hunter had made one or two campaigns in that direction, but had failed to accomplish the desired result. Our first day's march crossed Cedar Creek, Tumbling Run, and Tom's Brook, the scene of our running fight with General Rosser, and ever after best known to us as the "Woodstock Races," where we captured everything he had on wheels. We went into camp at Woodstock, having marched thirty miles.

Up early next morning (28th), and at six o'clock we were again on the move. This day we marched through Edenburg, across the North Fork of the Shenandoah River on our pontoon bridge, through Newmarket, going into camp at Lacey's Springs, nine miles north of Harrisonburg. Small bands of guerillas had hovered on our flanks during the day,

but no effort was made to drive them off, and no damage was done by them; distance marched twenty-nine miles.

March resumed at 6 A. M., March 1st, through Harrisonburg and Mount Crawford, and camp pitched that evening on Middle River; during the day's march we had been considerably annoyed by small forces of the enemy, and Rosser, with a force of two or three hundred men, attempted to burn the bridge over the Middle Fork of the Shenandoah, but did not succeed. Two of Colonel Capehart's regiments swam the river above the bridge, charged Rosser and routed him, driving him rapidly to Cline's Mills, the advance pushing almost to Staunton; but few of the enemy were killed, thirty taken prisoners, and twenty wagons and ambulances, with their contents, were captured and destroyed. Our loss was five men wounded. Cline's Mills are seven miles from Staunton, where the headquarters of General Early were said to be. Not knowing but that he would make a fight at Staunton, Colonel Stagg's brigade of the First Division was ordered to destroy the railroad bridge over Christian's Creek, between

Staunton and Waynesborough, to prevent his getting reinforcements by rail, or, in case he would not stand, to prevent him carrying off supplies and ordnance stores. The bridge was burned, but Early, learning of our approach, made a hasty retreat to Waynesborough, leaving word in Staunton that he intended to fight at that place.

The next morning we entered Staunton. "Little Phil" was now in a quandary what it was best to do, pursue the course to Lynchburg, leaving Early in his rear, or go out and fight his (Early's) infantry and cavalry, defeat him, and open a way through Rockfish Gap, and so have everything in his hands for the accomplishment of that portion of his instructions which directed the destruction of the Central Railroad and the James River Canal. He decided upon the latter course, and Custer's division was directed to take up the pursuit, followed closely by Devin's division. The rain had been pouring in torrents for two days, and the roads were bad beyond description; nevertheless the men pushed boldly on, although men and horses could scarcely be recognized for the mud which covered them.

Custer found Early in a well chosen position at Waynesborough with two brigades of infantry, some cavalry under Rosser, the infantry occupying breast-works. Custer, without waiting for the enemy to get up his courage over the delay of a careful recon-naissance, made his dispositions for attack at once, sending three regiments around the left flank of the enemy, which was somewhat exposed by being advanced *from*, instead of resting *upon* the bank of the river in his immediate rear.

Custer, with his other two brigades, partly mounted and partly dismounted, at a given signal boldly attacked and impetuously carried the enemy's works, while the Eighth New York and First Connecticut, which were formed in fours, charged over the breast-works and continued through the town of Waynesborough, sabreing a few men as they went along, and did not stop until they had crossed the South Fork of the Shenandoah River, which was immediately in Early's rear, where they formed as foragers, and with drawn sabres held the east bank of the stream.

The enemy threw down their arms and surrendered, with cheers at the suddenness with which they were captured.

The general officers present in this engagement with Early were Long, Wharton, Lilley, and Rosser, and it is a wonder how they escaped, unless they hid in obscure places in houses of the town.

The substantial results of this brilliant fight were eleven pieces of artillery, with horses and caissons complete, about two hundred wagons and teams, all loaded with subsistence, camp and garrison equipage, ammunition, and officers' baggage, seventeen battle flags, and one thousand and six hundred officers and enlisted men. The results, in a military point of view, were very great, as the crossing of the Blue Ridge, covered with snow as it was, at any other point, would have been difficult.

The disposal of the prisoners was the next question to be considered, and it was decided to send them to Winchester, more than one hundred miles away, under guard. The First New Hampshire and First Rhode Island, and a mixed crowd with lame and nearly worn out horses, and a number of dismounted men, taken from the many regiments of the command, about twelve hundred in all, were placed under the command of Colonel John L. Thompson,

of the First New Hampshire (formerly Lieutenant-Colonel of the First Rhode Island), and ordered to conduct the prisoners back within our lines at Winchester.

I will venture the opinion that, at no time during the war, did an officer have a more disagreeable service imposed upon him than that upon which Colonel Thompson was about to enter, and one of the purposes of this narrative is to show how satisfactorily he performed this duty, under the most difficult and discouraging circumstances, and the story, with some exceptions, cannot be better told than by the Colonel himself, in his official report, after his arrival at Winchester.

This report can be found on page 528, Series 1, Vol. XLVI., *Official Records, War of the Rebellion*, which reads as follows :

REPORT OF COLONEL JOHN L. THOMPSON, FIRST
NEW HAMPSHIRE CAVALRY, OF OPERATIONS
FROM MARCH 3D TO 8TH, 1865.

HEADQUARTERS, DETACHMENT OF CAVALRY,
WINCHESTER, VA., March 9, 1865.

SIR: I have the honor to submit the following report of the conducting a convoy of prisoners from Waynesborough to

our lines at this place. Some one thousand three hundred prisoners, including fifty-six officers, were turned over to me at Waynesborough on the 3d inst., with instructions to conduct them to Winchester.

I was furnished with an escort consisting of the dismounted men and those with poor horses from all the cavalry, about six hundred men, together with seven small organizations, numbering about six hundred men in the ranks.

I destroyed at Waynesborough four guns and caissons, and six ambulances, leaving the sick and wounded in the houses, the horses and mules being too weak to draw them. I took a gun with a train of fourteen horses and two mules. I was not provided with forage for the animals, nor rations for the escort or prisoners, except three days' rations of coffee, sugar, and salt.

I encamped at Fisherville on the night of the 3d, and before daylight sent the Fourth New York Cavalry, Major Schwartz commanding, to secure the two bridges between Staunton and Harrisonburg, as the streams were so swollen that it was impossible to ford them. They arrived only in time to save them from burning.

Major Schwartz was directed to inform the citizens of Staunton that a large number of prisoners would pass through the town, and that they must supply them with food.

On reaching Staunton I found a few females bringing out a poor pittance in baskets; I refused to allow them to approach the prisoners, and told the citizens that they could have half an hour to provide food, or I should take it from the Insane Asylum.

They brought none, and I took flour and bacon from the Asylum, upon which the prisoners subsisted until they arrived at this place. I learned at Staunton that General Rosser was collecting his command, which had all been furloughed, for the purpose of releasing the prisoners. He had only fifty men with whom he skirmished with our rear guard and prevented foraging, except with large parties. At Harrisonburg McNeil's company joined him, together with about one hundred more of his regular troops. He had sent dispatches in our front to all parts of the country, directing the citizens and soldiers to rendezvous at Mt. Jackson to prevent our crossing the North Fork of the Shenandoah, stating that he would follow with his forces, and certainly capture us.

I arrived at Mt. Jackson at noon on the 6th, and found the river impassable, even for horsemen, except at the ford near the pike. A force of two hundred men had collected, and held all the fords.

I spent the afternoon in trying to build a bridge by felling trees, but was unsuccessful. The river was falling rapidly however, and would be fordable next morning. At daylight I directed Major Brown, commanding the Twenty-second New York, with his own regiment and the First Rhode Island, to force the ford above the pike, and drive the enemy from the main ford. This was executed very handsomely; in ten minutes time the enemy was scattered in the mountains, and we had taken several prisoners.

At this time the enemy attacked our rear, which had taken a position on Rude's Hill, but was repulsed.

The dismounted men and prisoners forded the stream in

groups of fifty or sixty, holding each other by the arm. It was impossible for a single footman to ford, the water being breast high, with a rapid current.

When the fording was nearly completed General Rosser, with about three hundred men, made a vigorous assault upon the troops guarding our rear, and was again repulsed, with a loss to him of ten killed, several wounded, and twenty-five prisoners. The enemy made no other attack, though I was informed by the citizens that Mosby's men were to join General Rosser, and they would attack us in our camp that night. We marched, however, across Cedar Creek, and encamped in the earthworks at that place, reaching our lines at Winchester at noon on the 8th. I think General Rosser gave up the pursuit at Woodstock.

During the night at Mt. Jackson the gun we had brought was spiked and the carriage destroyed, as I was fearful that it could not be drawn over the ford, and it might fall into the hands of the enemy. I had no ammunition for it, the cartridges having been taken, by order of General Merritt, to destroy the bridge at Waynesborough.

Lieut.-Colonel Nichols, Ninth New York Cavalry, who was detailed by General Sheridan to take command of the troops of the First Division, rendered very efficient services.

Lieut.-Colonel Boice, Fifth New York Cavalry, whom I put in charge of those from the Third Division, deserves high commendation; he covered the rear during the entire march. His repulse of the enemy in the two assaults at Rude's Hill was brilliant; the prisoners could not withhold their commendation, but shouted with our own men.

*Major Brown, Twenty-second New York, also merits praise for the manner in which he forced the ford, and cleared the enemy from our front.**

The troops were all severely tried with labor and hunger, and behaved perfectly. Our loss was one officer (Captain Wyatt, First New Hampshire), and five men wounded, and two captured.

The number of prisoners was increased by four officers and thirty men.

I have the honor to be,

Your obedient servant,

J. L. THOMPSON,

*Colonel First New Hampshire Cavalry, Commanding Detachment.
Assistant Adjutant-General, Cavalry Corps, Middle Military Division.*

Endorsement :

HEADQUARTERS CAVALRY,
MIDDLE MILITARY DIVISION, March 10, 1865.

Respectfully forwarded.

The attention of the Major-General commanding is particularly invited to this report. The harassing difficulties overcome, and the skill, genius, and judgment displayed by Colonel Thompson in bringing safely to Winchester more prisoners than he started with, is deserving of the highest commendation and worthy of more than an ordinary notice.

A. T. A. TORBERT,

Brevet Major-General, etc.

*The italics are mine. W. G.

The capture of the remnant of Early's army at Waynesborough was a terrible blow to the hope of the Confederates that Sheridan would be stopped in his onward march, which was well understood by them to be directed against the Central Railroad and the James River Canal, and the defeat, thorough and complete, of the only organized command that might prevent such destruction, came with the force of a thunderbolt to paralyze them with fear, and already they could see and read the handwriting on the wall, proclaiming the downfall of the Confederacy.

To them it was a discouraging outlook, but out of all the despondency and gloom came the cheering assurance from Rosser (the "Saviour of the Valley"), that their fathers, brothers, and sons, captured at Waynesborough, would be soon recaptured, with their "Yankee guard." How that prophecy was fulfilled the foregoing pages explain.

The following report indicates that Rosser satisfied his superiors, if he did not himself:

HEADQUARTERS, ARMY OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA,
March 9, 1865.

GENERAL JOHN C. BRECKENRIDGE, Secretary of War:

General Rosser reports that on the 5th, with a few of his men, he attacked the enemy near Harrisonburg, who were guarding prisoners taken at Waynesborough, and captured a few prisoners. On the morning of the 7th, again attacked near Rude's Hill.

Having detained them for a day and night at the river, he caused them to retire in haste, abandoning the only piece of artillery they had and their ambulance. He annoyed them a great deal, and enabled a good many of our men to escape.

(Signed,)

R. E. LEE.

As a matter of fact only two men of our escort were captured and none of the prisoners escaped, and, it is my earnest opinion and belief that none desired to escape, for their service under Early's leadership had thoroughly disgusted them with such warfare as they had experienced in the Valley of Virginia, and they were sensible enough to realize that the success of Federal arms, and the consequent restoration of the Union were assured beyond a reasonable doubt, and in conversation with them during this trip down the Valley, I found a number of them very ready to

express such a belief, and they declared that they had already sacrificed *too much* in a hopeless cause.

Now a few words concerning the charge across the ford, and through the town of Mt. Jackson, that resulted, to use the language of Colonel Thompson, "*in the scattering of the enemy to the mountains,*" and was "*executed handsomely.*"

The advance of that charging force was Troop A, First Rhode Island Cavalry, commanded by our genial and much loved comrade, Lieutenant Samuel C. Willis. If there was any other officer in command I did not see him, and I was very close to Lieutenant Willis during the entire movement. In fact the whole affair seems quite fresh in my memory, although thirty years have elapsed — (does it seem possible, comrades?) — since the incident.

This was our last engagement with the enemy, and it is strange but nevertheless true, that the battle of Cedar Mountain, our first, and this last one, are the best remembered by me of all our engagements, excepting our Middleburg racket, that resulted so disastrously to our regiment, and put a star upon the shoulder of that splendid officer, Alfred N. Duffié.

The chill of the water as we forded the river that March morning in 1865, the movement along the river bank after we had crossed, behind a screen of bush and young tree growth that fringed the stream from the ford almost to the town of Mt. Jackson, our sudden and unexpected appearance near the bridge and main street of the town, so near the enemy guarding the bridge that we could discern the color of their eyes, the confusion among them caused by our sudden appearance, the few shots they sent us, the clear ringing voice of Lieutenant Willis as he, rising in his stirrups, fairly yelled, "There they are, come on First Rhode Island," the swift pursuit we made, with drawn sabres, through the main street of the town to its north side, where we took position on a knoll on the left of the pike, and waited the arrival of our supports, all seem a recent event to me.

In our front all but a few of the enemy had disappeared, and those few were among some scattering trees east of the pike about a quarter of a mile away, and they sent us a few scattering shots, without damage.

I wish that I could remember the names of all the

men that took part in the charge through the town, for it was not only gallant, but audacious in the extreme, and wonderfully successful in extricating the command from its disagreeable position that was hourly getting more and more perplexing as reinforcements were added to the enemy's force.

If my memory serves me right, Sergeants Crane, Spencer, and Cross, Privates Blake and Remington, were in the charge, besides Lieutenant Willis, myself, and a scout who joined us when we crossed the river and volunteered his services, and was accepted by Lieutenant Willis. I am quite sure that our charging force did not exceed fifteen in number, and this small number of veterans attacked certainly *five times* their number of Confederates, and "*scattered them to the mountains.*"

I cannot find any report of our regimental operations, from February 27th to March 8th, inclusive, in the official records or elsewhere, only such as the brief mention made of it in Colonel Thompson's report, that gives all the credit to "Major Brown and his regiment, the Twenty-second New York," for the scattering of the enemy to the mountains.

It is in evidence that the order for our movement across the river was given to Lieutenant Willis by Captain Capron, who, at that time, was in command of the First Rhode Island, and it would be interesting for many of us to know what part Major Brown, of the Twenty-second New York, had in the affair.

The members of our regiment are ever ready and willing to give to the comrades of other commands all that may be due them, but we must "open our lips and bark" a little when they are honored at our expense.

Colonel John L. Thompson's services as commander of this detachment were so much appreciated at corps headquarters that he was breveted brigadier-general United States Volunteers, on recommendation of General Sheridan.

There is no doubt as to the order given Major Brown by Colonel Thompson to cross the river and "force the ford," but it is not as clear to my mind how it happened that *our regiment*, instead of his own, the Twenty-second New York, were given the post of honor and danger in the movement. Immediately on the arrival of the detachment at Winches-

ter, Colonel Thompson, with his usual business-like promptness, made a report of the operations of his command, and supposing that Major Brown had carried out the instructions given him, gave that officer and his regiment credit for the valuable results achieved by a portion of the First Rhode Island Cavalry, and the compilers of the official records have published that report, and it must stand as history of the events described.

Some persons will naturally inquire *why* this case is presented at this late day since the war, and in reply it can be said that until the last issue of the *Official Records*, Series 1, Volume XLVI., in which is published the report mentioned, there was no definite knowledge of the injustice done, although there has been much conjecture, since the war, in the minds of the comrades interested, as to the why and wherefore official credit was not given them for exceptionally hazardous, brilliant, and valuable service at Mt. Jackson, Virginia, March 7, 1865.

Colonel Thompson had no motive for depriving the First Rhode Island Cavalry of any honor it deserved, and no disposition to do so, I am sure, for

our regiment was his first love, and up to the hour of his death, which occurred at Chicago, Ill., January 1, 1888, his relations with his Rhode Island comrades were not only fraternal, in the strongest soldiery sense, but affectionate in the extreme, and in various well remembered ways he manifested his great interest in their Veteran Association.

It is, to say the least, unfortunate for our regiment that no report of its operations, from February 27 to March 8, 1865, was written and forwarded to either detachment or division headquarters. If that duty had been performed no such error would have been made in Colonel Thompson's report, and the official records would have shown one more evidence of Rhode Island gallantry and soldiery achievement in the Civil War, and my comrades would realize the gratification and satisfaction of knowing that their faithful and efficient service had been given official recognition in the great historical record of war events now published, and being published, by the government, under the title, *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion*.

Such reports as the one in question, emanating

from the highest official source, and published in such a work, *must* stand as reliable, right or wrong.

In the case I have submitted, the fact is illustrated that the pen *is* mightier than the sword, since it can take from those that have successfully wielded that weapon credit for such success, and give to others not in the least entitled to it.

Comrades, our days are swiftly gliding by ; already many of our dear old comrades-in-arms have joined the "silent majority," among whom are some of those who were present in that charge at Mt. Jackson, March 7, 1865. In justice to them, and ourselves, let us, while we can, give such facts as will correct false statements and consequent impressions.

APPENDIX.

NOTE. In support of the claim made in this publication for the honors due, and in confirmation of its statements in reference to the "forcing of the ford," and the attack upon and rout of the enemy at Mt. Jackson, Va., March 7, 1865, the following letters are annexed hereto by permission of their authors.

Respectfully submitted,

WILLIAM GARDINER.

WORCESTER, MASS., June 17, 1895.

MY DEAR COMRADE GARDINER: It seems very strange that the error in Colonel Thompson's report should have been made that has been published in the "Official Records." There should not be any question as to the advance force that crossed the north Fork of the Shenandoah River on the morning of March 7, 1865.

I was ordered to take a portion of my Troop (A) and cross the river as an advance guard. This order was given me by Capt. Willis C. Capron, then in command of our small regiment.

I called for volunteers, and a few men gallantly responded. I do not remember their names — wish I could recall them to my mind — but have been informed by Sergeant Jasper Spencer that only nine responded. With this small number of men and the scout that joined us after we crossed the river and offered his services to me and was accepted, we forced the enemy from the ford, charged and drove them from their position at the ruins of the destroyed bridge that formerly spanned the river at the Pike road, they retreating with a rush back to the bridge over the ditch at the foot of the hill, from which

we drove them through the village of Mt. Jackson to the woods and mountains, by our rapid, brave and effective charge.

The fact is, ours was the advance that morning, and continued in the advance until we arrived at Cedar Creek that evening and went into bivouac; of this I am sure, for it was my good fortune to command the advance squadron the entire day. Every man now living who was there must remember our work all that day. Your paper is entirely correct, and its statements cannot be shaken. The charge at Mt. Jackson, as you declare in your paper, "was gallant in the extreme and wonderfully successful," but we all thought very little of it at the time, although jubilant over our success.

Viewing the affair in retrospect, it does seem a great injustice that these nine or ten men, volunteers in an exceptionally hazardous movement that by their valor was made a grand success such as should entitle them to medals of honor, do not find even faint words of praise, but instead, credit for their brilliant service given to others not in the least deserving of it. If any other organization got in front of us that day when the river was crossed in the early morning, where did it go to, and how did it happen that we were the first to attack and rout the enemy? I will say in conclusion that had the officer then in command of our regiment kept a journal of the movements and operations of his command, as was his military duty to do, these things need not have been written.

Faithfully yours,

SAMUEL C. WILLIS,

Formerly 1st Lieutenant Troop A, 1st R. I. Cavalry.

TILTON, N. H., Nov. 11, 1895.

MY DEAR OLD COMRADE: I hope you will forgive me for neglecting so long to acknowledge my appreciation of your paper on "Cavalry Operations," read by Major Bliss at the

recent Annual Reunion of the First New Hampshire Cavalry Veteran Association at Weirs, in this State. Your statements in reference to the Mt. Jackson episode are in accord with my memory of that affair, and I have excellent reason for retaining a clear recollection of that event, for it was my last fight, and in which I received a gun shot wound.

In response to your request for my personal recollections of the situation at Mt. Jackson, March 6 and 7, 1865, I will say that my regiment, First New Hampshire Cavalry, arrived at Rude's Hill a little after noon on the 6th; we were a part of the rear guard; the advance guard, being the Twenty-second New York, were skirmishing with the enemy at the ford near the village of Mt. Jackson, and this continued most of the afternoon.

Sometime during the night Colonel Thompson sent for me to come to his headquarters and "talk over the situation." While I was there an officer reported that the river was falling, and expressed the opinion that it would be possible to cross at a place he had found up the stream. The Colonel then said, turning to me, "By Moses, I will send the First Rhode Island across as soon as it is light in the morning and whip them fellows; then we can cross the prisoners and we will have the river between us and Rosser."

After talking over the situation and the probability of an early and hot attack on the rear by Rosser in the morning, I returned to my command, but not to sleep. The rear guard consisted of the Fifth New York, commanded by Major Boice, and the First New Hampshire. With the break of day I was on the watch from our position on Rude's Hill to see the First Rhode Island cross the river, always a dangerous operation in the face of an enterprising enemy, but that regiment was over before we knew it. The first glimpse we had of them, they were nearly into the village; we could hear the firing and the cheers as the Rhode Islanders charged after the "Johnnies,"

now fleeing for their lives. Just at this time Rosser made a fierce attack on the First New Hampshire, and we, with assistance of the Fifth New York, drove the enemy back. In this affair I was wounded, and I still carry that piece of lead in my body as a souvenir of my last battle in the Civil War. After the prisoners had crossed the river, I went over to the town, and the surgeon of the First Rhode Island dressed my wound.

Since the war I have often heard Colonel Thompson refer to this last charge of the First Rhode Island at Mt. Jackson. The last time I met him was at his house in Chicago, and together we reviewed the campaigns of the war in which we were associated together, and in which we played our humble part in the great drama of Civil War from 1861 to 1865. The march down the Valley with the remnant of Jubal Early's army, captured at Waynesborough, the thrilling experience we had in that movement, the many disadvantages we labored under, cold and cheerless weather, rainstorms and swollen rivers, little to eat, a vigilant enemy harassing on our front, flanks and rear, and nearly fourteen hundred more in our custody, hopeful that their comrades would succeed in the effort to release them, were talked of as a number of old comrades sat in the general's comfortable and elegant home, with him acting, in his quiet and modest way, as the generous host. He said, "See here boys, in our first fight at Front Royal, May 30, 1862, 125 officers and men of the First Rhode Island captured 150, and in our last fight at Mt. Jackson in the Valley, March 7, 1865, a few men of the First Rhode Island charged in a brilliant manner, driving superior numbers of the enemy like chaff before the wind," thus showing that he was cognizant of the fact *then*, if not at the time he made his report, on March 9, 1865. and it is now unfortunately published in the "Official Records."

As ever, yours in F. C. and L.,

OTIS C. WYATT,

Formerly Captain Com'dg First New Hampshire Cavalry.

TO WILLIAM GARDINER,

Secretary First Rhode Island Cavalry Veteran Association.

EAST GREENWICH, R. I., Dec. 3, 1895.

MR. WILLIAM GARDINER.

DEAR SIR AND COMRADE : The statements made in your paper entitled "Cavalry Operations, Middle Military Division, Armies of the United States, participated in by the First Rhode Island Cavalry," and read by you at the annual reunion of the regimental comrades, August 9th of this year, at Field's Point, Providence, R. I., are entirely correct, and I am willing to testify,—under oath if necessary—as to the truth of all you have written concerning the Mt. Jackson incident in our career as a regiment.

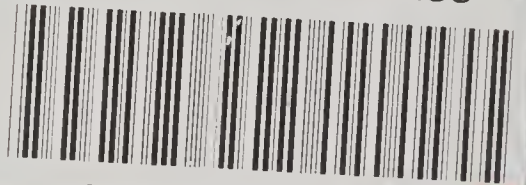
It is a regrettable thing that such a mistake should have been made in Colonel Thompson's report, and is now published as history in the "Official Records."

Very sincerely yours, of Camp and Field,

JASPER SPENCER,

Formerly Sergeant Troop A, 1st R. I. Cav.

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